

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [281]

The Statement I Issued Before You Was a Mistake of Mine!

(Insights into Babylonian Talmud Eiruvין 104a)



Background to Our Story

Rava



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rava_\(amora\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rava_(amora))

Abba ben Joseph bar Ḥama (c. 280 – 352 CE), who is exclusively referred to in the Talmud by the name Rava (רבא), was a Babylonian rabbi who belonged to the fourth generation of amoraim. He is known for his debates with Abaye, and is one of the most often cited rabbis in the Talmud.

He was born about 280 CE in [Mahoza](#) (a suburb of [Ctesiphon](#), the capital of [Babylonia](#)), where his father was a wealthy and distinguished scholar. In his youth Rava went to [Sura](#), where he attended the lectures of [Rav Chisda](#) and associated with [Rami bar Hama](#). About ten years after Rami's death Rava married his widow, the daughter of Rav Chisda. It is said that earlier Rav Chisda's daughter sat in her father's classroom, while his students, Rava and Rami bar Hama, stand before them. When Rav Chisda asked her which of the two she wants to marry, she replied "both of them," and Rava added, "I'll be the last one" (commentators let us know that she indeed married Rami first and Rava second). They had five sons, the eldest of whom, Joseph, died during his parents' lifetime.

Rava studied at the [Talmudical Academy](#) at [Pumbedita](#), site of modern-day Falluja, Iraq. Rava's teachers were [Rav Yosef](#), Rabbah, and, chiefly, [Rav Nachman](#) (who lived in Mahoza). His chief study-companion was [Abaye](#), who was about the same age, and both of them developed the dialectic method which [Rav Judah](#) and their teacher Rabbah had established in their discussions of tradition; their debates became known as the "Havayot de-Abaye ve-Rava".

Rava enjoyed the special protection of the mother of [Shapur II](#), the reigning King of Persia. For this reason, and in consideration of large sums which he secretly

contributed to the court, he succeeded in making less severe Shapur's oppressions of the Jews in Babylonia.

When, after the death of Rav Yosef, Abaye was chosen head of the Academy of Pumbedita (Horayot 14a), Rava founded a school of his own in Mahoza. Many pupils, preferring his lectures Abaye's, followed him to there. After Abaye's death Rava was elected head of the school, and the academy was transferred from Pumbedita to Mahoza, which, during the lifetime of Rava, was the only seat of Jewish learning in Babylonia.

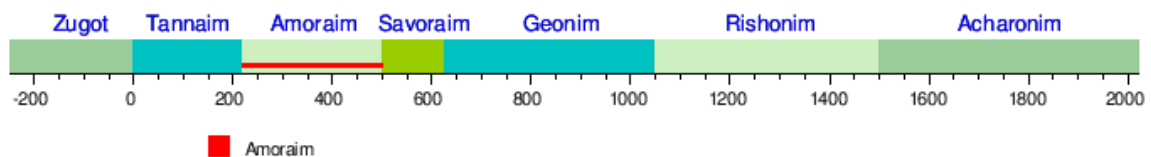
When [Rabbah bar Nahmani](#), the head of the [yeshiva](#) of [Pumbedita](#), retired, the position went to [Abaye](#). At that point, Rava returned to [Mahoza](#), where he established a yeshiva there. After the death of Abaye, many of his students moved from Pumbedita to Mahoza, to join Rava's Yeshiva, which had become one of the intellectual centers of the Babylonian Jewish Community.

Amoraim



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amoraim>

Amoraim ([Aramaic](#): plural אמוראים amoraim, singular *Amora* - "those who say" or "those who speak over the people", or "spokesmen") refers to [Jewish](#) scholars of the period from about 200 to 500 [CE](#), who "said" or "told over" the teachings of the [Oral Torah](#). They were primarily located in [Babylonia](#) and the [Land of Israel](#). Their legal discussions and debates were eventually [codified](#) in the [Gemara](#). The *Amoraim* followed the [Tannaim](#) in the sequence of ancient Jewish scholars. The *Tannaim* were direct transmitters of uncodified oral tradition; the *Amoraim* expounded upon and clarified the oral law after its initial codification.



Baraita



[Baraita - Wikipedia](#)

Baraita ([Aramaic](#) : בְּרַיְיְתָא "external" or "outside"; pl. *Barayata* or *Baraitot*; also Baraitha, Beraita; [Ashkenazi](#): Beraisa) designates a tradition in the [Jewish oral law](#) not incorporated in the [Mishnah](#). *Baraita* thus refers to teachings "outside" of [the six orders of the Mishnah](#). Originally, "Baraita" probably referred to teachings from schools outside the main Mishnaic-era [academies](#) – although in later collections, individual *Baraitot* are often authored by sages of the Mishna (*Tannaim*).

According to [Maimonides](#) (*Introduction to Mishneh Torah*), the baraitot were compiled by [Rabbi Hoshaya](#) and [Bar Kappara](#), although no compilation was passed down to us as the [Tosefta](#) was.

Because the [Mishnah](#) encapsulates the entire [Oral Law](#) in a purposely compact form (designed to both facilitate *and* necessitate oral transmission), many variant versions, additional explanations, clarifications and rulings were not included in the

Mishnah. These were later compiled in works called the "*Baraitot*" – often in the form of a list of teachings by one sage. *Baraita* can thus also designate collections of such traditions. The main collections of *Baraita* are the [Tosefta](#) and the [Halakhic Midrashim](#) ([Mekhilta](#), [Sifra](#) and [Sifre](#)).

The authority of the *Baraita* is somewhat less than that of the Mishnah. Nevertheless, these works are the basic "proof-text" cross-referenced by the [Talmudic](#) sages in their analysis and interpretation of the Mishnah; see [Gemara](#). Here, a teaching from the *Baraita* is usually introduced by the [Aramaic](#) word "*Tanya*" ("It was orally taught") or by "*Tanu Rabanan*" ("*Our Rabbis* have orally taught"), whereas "*Tnan*" ("*We* have orally taught") introduces quotations from the [Mishnah](#). Anonymous *Baraitot* are often attributed to particular *Tannaim* by the Talmud. In the [Jerusalem Talmud](#), references to *Baraitot* are less common.

The style of the *Baraita* is basically indistinguishable from that of the Mishnah, but some come closer to Mishnaic idiom than others. For example, the second chapter of *Kallah Rabbathi*, a *beraita* compilation, is often appended to [Pirkei Avoth](#), as both are similar in style and content.

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Eirubin 104a

דָּרַשׁ רַבָּא: תִּצַר שְׁנֵתְקַלְקְלָהּ בְּמִימֵי גְשָׁמִים – מִבֵּיא תִבְנֶן וּמֵרָדָה בָּהּ
אָמַר לִיהִי רַב פָּפָא לְרַבָּא, וְהִתְנַיָּא: כְּשֶׁהוּא מֵרָדָה – אֵינּוּ מֵרָדָה לֹא בְּסֵל וְלֹא בְּקוּפָה אֲלֵא בְּשׁוּלֵי
קוּפָה!
הִזְדַּר אֲוִקִים רַבָּא אֲמַנְרָא עָלֶיהָ וְדָרַשׁ: דְּבָרִים שְׂאֵמְרֵתִי לְפָנֶיכֶם טְעוּת הֵן בְּיָדֵי, בְּרַם כֶּה אָמְרוּ
מִשּׁוֹם רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר: וְכִשֶׁהוּא מֵרָדָה אֵינּוּ מֵרָדָה לֹא בְּסֵל וְלֹא בְּקוּפָה אֲלֵא בְּשׁוּלֵי קוּפָה

Rava taught: In a courtyard that was damaged on Shabbat by rainwater, one may bring straw and scatter it about to make it easier to walk across.

Rav Pappa said to Rava: But wasn't it taught in a *baraita*: When one scatters the straw, he must not scatter it either with a small basket or with a large basket, but only with the bottom of a broken basket, i.e., he must scatter the straw in a manner different from that of an ordinary weekday. Rava, however, indicates that he may scatter the straw in the usual fashion.

Rava then appointed an *amora* before him to publicize his teaching, and taught: The statement I issued before you was a mistake of mine. However, in fact they said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer as follows: And when one scatters the straw, he must not scatter it either with a small basket or with a large basket, but only with the bottom of a broken basket.



Explaining the Story - What is going on in our story? (Explain the sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? In what do they differ Rava’s original teaching and the one in the baraita?

? Why is the law that we need to use the bottom of a broken basket to scatter the straw on Shabbat?

Bonus ? How do we know that Rava owned his mistake?

Extra Bonus ? “Rava then appointed an *amora* before him to publicize his teaching” What was Rava’s teaching?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? Why is so important for Rava to publicize his mistake?

“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from These Texts



I made a mistake! - The most important lesson a teacher can teach his students.



In our story Rava, one of the leading Rabbis in his generation, made a mistake (the subject itself is not very important) and he is corrected by one of his students.

Immediately, Rava decides to publicly admit and record his mistake, first to prevent his students and future generations from erring, and most importantly to teach his students and all of us, that when you own your mistakes, your mistakes don’t own you. You learn from them, and you earn respect.